

DNA Day Essay Contest Rubric

Criteria	0--1	2—3	4--5	6
Overall accuracy of the scientific content	Explanation of scientific content is largely absent.	The description of scientific content is vague, inaccurately described and/or missing key components.	Essay provides a generally accurate explanation of scientific content, but there may be minor errors.	Essay presents an accurate, detailed, and reasonably complete description of scientific content.
Criteria	0--1	2—3	4--5	6
Use of evidence in support of an argument; essay well-focused on the question/topic selected	Little or no scientific evidence is used to support an argument. Essay is presented more as opinion than as a product of thoughtful review and research.	Evidence is used in support of the argument, but the discussion is superficial or incorrect.	Appropriate evidence is used to support argument. Argument is reasonably persuasive but is less coherent than in the best essays.	Strong, evidence-based and focused argument reveals a sophisticated understanding of topic.
Criterion	0--1	2--3	4	5
Writing quality (clear thesis, composition, syntax, spelling, and grammar)	Contains multiple spelling, grammatical or typographical errors. Inconsistent and poor use of language makes the essay difficult to read.	Contains some spelling, grammatical or typographical errors. Language usage/writing is of average quality or below.	Contains few spelling, grammatical or typographical errors. Clearly written. Writing is above average quality.	Contains virtually no spelling, grammatical or typographical errors. Writing is of uniformly high quality, perhaps even elegant.
Criterion	0	1	2	3
References and citations (quality and appropriateness)	No references or citations.	Inadequately cited with one or two references to general Web sites, such as Wikipedia and/or textbooks.	Adequate citation number and placement but few, if any, high-quality sources. Web sites may be more targeted to genomics, such as NIH or university sites.	Thoroughly cited with several high-quality sources, including one or more citations from the primary literature.